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“Word upon a Word”: Parallelism, Meaning, and Emergent Structure in Kalevala-meter Poetry

Lotte Tarkka

Henrik Gabriel Porthan, the Professor of Eloquence at the Academy of Turku in Finland, was one of the first scholars to describe the nature and effect of parallelism in Finnish vernacular poetry. In 1766 he designated these poems sung in a meter used widely in Baltic-Finnic languages as *Runis nostris* (“our poems”) (Porthan 1867:320). The appropriation of this multi-ethnic poetic tradition culminated in the publication of Elias Lönnrot’s *Kalevala* (1835 and 1849), the national epic of Finland that he created by using the *Runis nostris*, or oral poems collected in Finland, Karelia, and Ingria, as his sources. Since Lönnrot, the meter became known, somewhat anachronistically, as the Kalevala-meter. Porthan (1867:323) described parallelism as *rhythmus sensus*, a harmonious structuring of meaning, or of “thoughts and notions” in poetry. This harmonious configuration which he called *rime du sens* (“rhyme of sense”) had an impact on the aesthetics and expressive efficacy of the poem (323) It lent these poems “a kind of sumptuousness, and altogether splendid vigor. The mind of the reader or listener is certainly affected more intensely, when it is as if hammered repeatedly” (320).¹ Adding to this performative and affective momentum, parallelism results in a cumulative string of ideas that is simultaneously precise and verbose (320):

[A]n idea is not only expressed with a simple clause but also presented and highlighted with two or, if needed, even more lines, so that the phrasing in each is different [. . .]. And when the idea of the first line is finalized by repetition, it is linked to another, which is similarly repeated, and so on.

As Porthan noted (325), each line must contain a “complete idea or part of a clause”—“The idea may never end otherwise than together with the line, and a word belonging to the idea cannot be transferred to the next line.” Because enjambment was undesirable, it was the flexible patterning of parallelism that made the poem a cohesive continuum, binding the lines to each other and eventually into a longer sequence. The serial structure only appears to be mechanical (Porthan

¹The English translations by the present author are based on a comparative reading of two Finnish translations (Porthan 1904 and 1983) with the original in Latin (originally 1766-78, reprinted in Porthan 1867). References refer to the 1867 edition in Latin. Although Porthan uses the word *rhythmus* (literally, “rhythm”) he is not talking about rhythm in the modern sense of the word.

1867:320): “In this way, the whole poem rises as a continuous series of figures.”² Porthan chooses the Latin verb *insurgo*, (“to rise up,” “gather force,” or “increase”) to point to the emergence of a poem as a powerful movement with an orientation—an ascension. This process does not result in a mechanical and repetitive serial structure but one that is striving towards finalization, climax, and impact.

In this essay I employ the notion of parallelism as a methodological tool in an analysis of the meanings conveyed in short forms of folklore in the Kalevala-meter: proverbs, aphorisms, and lyric poetry. Drawing from Roman Jakobson’s (1987a and 1987c) treatment of the poetic function, I use the term paradigm or paradigmatic axis (or selection) to point to the dimension of semantically related components out of which the singer selects the suitable word to fill in the slots in the parallel line. The syntagmatic axis (or combination) is the realized continuum of words constituting the utterance, or line, and eventually the whole poetic composition.³ In his theorem of the poetic function, Jakobson defines communication dominated by the poetic function as something intrinsically parallelistic. The famous thesis “*The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination*” (Jakobson 1987a:71 and Jakobson 1987c:127; emphasis original) means that the axis of similarity or equivalence that orders the paradigmatic set is the major principle in the construction of poetic utterances on the syntagmatic level. Evelyn Waugh (1985:150) describes texts dominated by poetic function: “The verbal material displays overall a hierarchical structure of *symmetries*, based on repetitions, regularities, and systematizations of various kinds.” These symmetries are, at their core, different kinds of parallelisms.

In the interpretation of the poems below, I pay special attention to the paradigms, that is to say, the sets of eligible words and expressions in the construction of poetic lines and longer poetic compositions. The selection of the words actually used is not based only on semantics, although there is a tendency to select semantically related words from synonymous to related and even antithetical terms. In principle, meter determines the length of the word and restricts the positions in which its stressed syllable can appear, but the meter can be modified. Further, the tendency of alliteration within and between the lines affects word choice. In the case of onomatopoeitic expressions, sound patterns are even decisive factors.⁴ Composition in performance was laborious and intentional, an intellectual and aesthetic endeavor in which the singer had to activate the paradigmatic set of eligible expressions to build a syntagmatic continuum on the level of the line, and eventually on the level of a poetic composition

²Porthan uses the word “figure” (*figura*), a term used already in Classical rhetoric. On a general level, the term refers to expressions that differ from the normal in terms of 1) a discernible structure (a syntactic, semantic, or pragmatic form) and 2) use that attracts attention in its departure from normal manners of expression (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971 [1958]:167-68).

³Jakobson (1985a:29) criticizes the Saussurean terms syntagmatic and paradigmatic and uses the terms axis of combination and axis of selection instead. I will, however use the distinction syntagmatic / paradigmatic because the term for the methodologically central paradigm, namely “selection set” (for example, Waugh 1985:150), is unsatisfactory. See Jakobson (1987a:71 and Jakobson 1987b:98-99) and Waugh (1985:149-52).

⁴According to Matti Kuusi (1983:192), singers in the northern areas of Kalevala-meter favored semantic parallelism (“predominantly the semantic binding of lines”) whereas in the southern areas such as Ingria, semantic-phonological equivalences dominated in the construction of parallelistic couplets. The links between lines were based not only on “repetitive figures of meaning” but also on “repeated words or words that echoed similarly.”

characterized by cohesion and coherence. Although the traditional poetic language to a large extent operated subliminally,⁵ through internalized and routinized expressive strategies it offered the tools for creativity and communication of meanings that were both intentional and widely appreciated in the community.

I discuss the creation of cohesion and semantic structure in oral poetry by considering how an idea was developed by subtle repetitive variation and presentation of alternating points of view in parallel lines. The focus is on the poetic strategies of communicating complex ideas through the artful combination of repetition and variation. Jakobson (1987c:125-26) insisted that the study of parallelism, or “the interaction between syntactic, morphologic and lexical equivalences and discrepancies, the diverse kinds of semantic contiguities, similarities, synonymies, and antonymies,” should not concentrate on form at the expense of meaning. I take the paradigmatic sets to highlight the conceptual categories and social representations in the culture. In choosing between the different options within a paradigm, the singer had the opportunity to articulate the connections between and within the categories and representations. As the semantic equivalence is quite flexible, complex and informative metaphoric or metonymic relations may be constructed by pairing words from different conceptual categories. Thus, semantic parallelism has the potential to create new meanings, challenge old ones, and eventually alter the way in which people perceive themselves, the world, and the epistemological and communicative frames of knowing and speaking about the world.

Materials and Ethnographic Context

The present analysis is organized in three case studies on the corpus of proverbs and poems performed by Anni Lehtonen (1866-1943), a renowned singer of Kalevala-meter poems from the village of Vuonninen in the Viena Karelian parish of Vuokkiniemi. Situated along the border between Finland and Russia, the parish of Vuokkiniemi was a dynamic meeting point of cultural influences from the East and the West. Kalevala-meter poetry was widely performed on ritual, daily, and festive occasions. The diverse genres of poetry sung or recited in the Kalevala-meter included epic poetry, incantations and magic formulae, ritual songs, lyric and aphoristic poems, and poems on local historical circumstances and life histories. Because of the ritual uses of incantations and songs related to rites of transition, the poetic idiom was socially central, and even perceived as an identity symbol in the local culture. Vuokkiniemi and its environs were viewed as “the homeland of song,” “the classical land of the Finnish muses” (Fellman 1906:497), and the Romantic-nationalistic interest of Finnish collectors contributed to the intense documentation of the tradition from the 1820s until the 1920s. The poems were written down and, starting from the 1920s, increasingly documented with early audio-recording equipment. The documents rarely include detailed information on the performance contexts, styles, or meanings attributed to the poems and the interpretations have to rely on ethnographic information and on the contents of the poems.⁶

⁵See Jakobson (1985b:62-68 and 1987c:127-28).

⁶For a contextual and intertextual analysis of the Vuokkiniemi corpus, see Tarkka (2013).

Anni Lehtonen was born into families of skillful singers on both maternal and paternal sides (Laaksonen 1995:223-24). The two family lines differed radically in terms of their orientation to the tradition of oral poetry in the Kalevala-metre. The maternal line of the Malinen



Fig. 1. Anni Lehtonen (1866-1943). SKS KRA photo collection, Paulaharju 5413.9. Photo by Samuli Paulaharju, 1915.

family represented a stable tradition with fixed texts and minimal variation in their performances, whereas the paternal line of the Karjalainens improvised and generated ever-new associations in performance (Tarkka 2013:90). Anni combined the two strategies, and coined the life of tradition in idiosyncratic proverbs that assess the transmission and creation of tradition. “Songs travel along the family, words along the kin” (*Laulut kulkoo sukuja myöten, sanat rotuja myöten*), yet, “The words are borne by singing, it is the gift that brings the words” (*Laulaen ne sanat sukeutuu, lahja se sanoja tuo*) (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9609, 9659. 1915). Matti Kuusi (1970:298) has characterized her tradition orientation as “Kalevalaic language skill, a facility for tradition-based improvisation that had reached the acme of development” (see also Tarkka 2013:153). Locally Anni was known as a ritual expert, a healer and a performer of incantations, a singer of Kalevala-meter wedding songs, and performer of ritual laments at weddings and funerals (Niemi 1921:1117-19). She was also reputed as a singer

of dance songs, and fully aware of her reputation (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9635. 1915). The local acknowledgement clearly indicates that she was a master of Kalevala-meter poetry, with expert knowledge and an innate ability.

Anni Lehtonen was widowed at the age of 38 and left to provide for her six children. In 1909, while searching for temporary employment and begging in the town of Oulu in Northern Finland, she met by chance the prolific Finnish writer and ethnographer Samuli Paulaharju (1875-1944). During the following seven winters, Anni and Paulaharju worked closely together. While working as a washerwoman for affluent families of Oulu, Anni spent her spare time with the Paulaharju household, forming bonds of patronage and even friendship with the family and their servants (Laaksonen 1995:223-36; Seppä 2015:58-60). The outcome of Anni and Paulaharju’s collaboration was a massive folklore collection that includes for example over 1,000 Kalevala-meter poems, 200 laments, and thousands of ethnographic accounts (Seppä 2015:58; Tarkka 2013:64).⁷

The most remarkable part of the Lehtonen-Paulaharju collection is the corpus of over 8,000 proverbs. In the folklore archive the authenticity of these proverbs was questioned from the outset. The collector had used a printed edition of proverbs (Koskimies 1906) to build a systematic overview of proverbial competence, and thus the performed texts did not represent

⁷Apart from Paulaharju, Juho Ranta (1867-1953), the cantor and organist of the Oulu cathedral, (1867-1953), also documented Anni’s performances which he characterized as “improvisation.” Ranta made musical notations on 23 sung performances, eight of them with lyrics (SKS KRA. Ranta VK 79. 1914).

proverbs in the strict sense of the word (Kuusi 1970:293; Leino 1970:249). Paulaharju, however, defended himself: he had not read the printed proverbs aloud, but merely presented the basic idea and thus “dug up the proverb.”⁸ Anni was able to modify the printed proverbs, altering their style, deviating from the poetic meter, and elaborating on their contents (see Kuusi 1970:298). Although the Lehtonen-Paulaharju collection does not represent the range of conventional and crystallized proverbial wisdom practiced generally in the region of Viena Karelia (see also Huttu-Hiltunen 2008:113-14, Kuusi 1970:298-99), the unorthodox collection technique provides a true testing ground for parallelism and the creative variation of form and content. Paulaharju encouraged exhaustive treatment of the theme at hand, and Anni responded by stretching the limits of the expressive culture.

The first case study looks at Anni’s proverbs and the poetic sequences she built from them. The chains of proverbs display an array of strategic uses of parallelism in the communication of culturally and individually central themes, concepts, and values, such as honor, knowledge, wisdom, and tradition. The second analysis focuses on a lyric poem that consists of systematically parallel pairs of poetic lines that do not comply with the regularities of the Kalevala-meter. Again, parallelism can be shown to be a decisive tool in the articulation of cultural categories and the practices attached to them. The intricate structure built on repetition and variation begs essential metapoetic questions and proposals on the essence of song, expression, emotions, and the self. The last poem, a lyric song in the Kalevala-meter, employs semantic parallelism in the construction of a cathartic autobiography. The series of parallelistic couplets gives a cross-exposure of a widow’s plight and offers one possible solution to the existential and social limbo experienced by the singer and the likes of her. The analysis of Anni Lehtonen’s use of parallelism concludes with a discussion of the emic terms she used in the assessment of the craft of a poet and a singer.

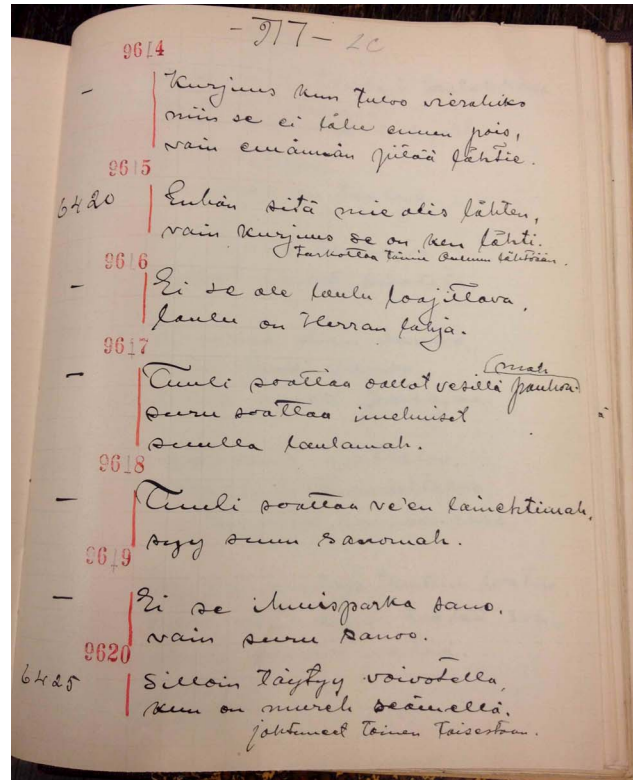


Fig. 2. Anni Lehtonen’s string of proverbs on the intertwining notions of poverty, sorrow and song make up a continuation of the poem The Self Wouldn’t (Fig. 3) (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9614-9620. 1915). With the red vertical line Paulaharju marked the proverbs, phrases, and poems that Anni performed spontaneously, without the collector’s inducement. Photo by author.

⁸Proverbs marked with red in the manuscript were “remembered by Anni by herself without being ‘dug up’, either induced by a proverb she just uttered, or just on their own” (SKS KRA. Paulaharju, preface to c)4355-9355. 1915). The texts treated here belong to this category.

Parallelism in Kalevala-Meter Poetry

Porthan was the first to describe the tradition of Kalevala-meter poetry with scholarly precision, combining first-hand empirical evidence with theoretical sophistication (Kajanto 1983:16-17). The poems are non-stanzaic, and their basic unit is one line that normally consists of eight syllables divided into four trochaic feet, each with a rising and falling position. As a basic rule, the meter dictates the position of each word used according to the length of its stressed syllable. Long syllables with word stress (on the first syllable of each word) have to coincide with the rising position of the foot; a short syllable with stress has to coincide with the falling position of the foot. This basic rule does not apply to the first foot of the line. There are several additional rules and tendencies that govern the production of metrically ideal lines, but all of these are applied flexibly⁹ in oral performance. The mode of performance affects the meter and sung meter differs significantly from dictated verse (Kallio 2014:94-95; Saarinen 2013:40). The meter was used in various genres of oral poetry and minor folklore: epic and lyric poetry, magic formulae and incantations, ritual songs, proverbs and riddles. Also the performance styles varied according to genre. Epic, ritual, and lyric songs, as well as most incantations, were sung, whereas short magic formulae were recited and proverbs and riddles uttered.

Stylistically, Kalevala-meter poetry is characterized by alliteration and parallelisms of many kinds (see Leino 1994; Kuusi et al. 1977:62-65). The most pervasive kinds of parallelism have a semantic basis that links units of utterance into pairs or longer sequences, discussed here in terms of synonymous, analogical and antithetical parallelism. Synonymous parallelism describes parallelism in which semantically equivalent terms or phraseology match one another in parallel units to express the same semantic content. Analogical parallelism involves a correlation of equivalence between parallel units although actual semantic content may be different. Sometimes, metaphorical language makes it difficult to differentiate analogical from synonymous parallelism. Antithetical parallelism is contrastive, whether or not using negation: it is built on semantic juxtaposition or reversal of meaning.

The most common unit to be varied in this manner is the line, thus the parallel units are also equivalent in terms of metrical form (see Frog 2014b:12-13). In the case of semantically equivalent parallel lines, the first line (or main line) in the couplet is the most complete, and in the following parallel line(s) there may be no syntactic component (object, subject, verb etc.) without an equivalent in the main line. Thus, when the main line is hierarchically dominant, the parallel line(s) may be elliptic, omitting one or more syntactic components. Also smaller (half-lines) and larger units (for example, couplets or narrative episodes) may be subjected to parallelistic expansion (Anttonen 1994:120-23; Kuusi et al. 1977:66; Steinitz 1934; Saarinen, this volume).

The ways in which parallelism structures a poem obviously vary according to genre. The narrative flow in epic poems and the contemplative argumentation found in lyric and aphoristic poems require different kinds of structuring. In epic poetry the function of parallelism is often to accent and elaborate the plot or to characterize the protagonists (Kuusi et al. 1977:66): the task is

⁹See Frog (2014a:68): “Metrical well-formedness in oral poetry is a perceived quality of text that can vary by degree in ‘better’ or ‘worse’ lines rather than being assessed in terms of absolute binary categories of ‘metrically well-formed’ versus ‘not metrically well-formed’.”

a descriptive one (see Tarkka 1996:76; Saarinen 2014:118). Also, the complex structures of parallelism, such as nucleus and frame repetition, were elementary in the structure of epic poetry (Kuusi et al. 1977:59, 66). In shorter, non-narrative genres, parallelism gives an opportunity for subtle variation and even radical contestation of the ideas presented in the very same text, building dialogically resonant wholes. Without a plot, the articulation brought about by parallelism is a decisive factor in the process of entextualization of such short forms of folklore. The condensed form and contemplative and argumentative stance of proverbs especially rely on parallelism and its ability to activate potential meanings.

Although the main emphasis has been on the redundant informational value of semantic parallelism (see Frog 2014b:12; Saarinen 2014:118), its capacity to create meaning has also been touched upon in the study of Kalevala-meter poetry. For example, in his treatment of repetition in Kalevala-meter poetry, Kaarle Krohn (1918:73-74) maintained that “The content of the poem is actually put forth in couplets” that were constructed according to “laws of thought.” These laws linked a term to its potential parallels (that is, the paradigm): “These laws are the very same that, in solitary contemplation or sociable conversation, steer the movement of the thought from one thing to another.” Krohn’s (1918:73-77) assessment of the law of similarity covers diverse relations between conceptual categories, such as abstract versus concrete, part versus whole, and generic versus particular; the law of contiguity linked potential parallels in terms of causation or spatial and temporal contact. The interpretive potential in these observations was missed, however, and Krohn used the idea only in the reconstruction of *ur*-forms, to distinguish original ideas from secondary ones.¹⁰

Parallelistic Argumentation in Proverb Sequences: *Take the Learning*

In the Vuokkiniemi area, 60 per cent of proverbs were cast in the Kalevala-meter (Kuusi 1978:55-57). The basic structural unit of these proverbs is the ideally eight-syllable trochaic line. Such a proverb typically consists of a couplet: two poetic lines connected through semantic parallelism (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c) 7136. 1913):

*Kylä köyhän kunnivona,
miero vaivasen varana.*

The village as the poor’s honor,
the people as the pauper’s means.

The syntagmatic structure and syntax in the lines is similar. The essive case indicated by the ending *-na* signals that something is in the state or act of being, or fulfilling a specific function.

¹⁰ Krohn bases his dichotomy of laws of association on Oscar Relander’s (1894:8-9 *passim*) dissertation on figurative language in Kalevala-meter poetry. Relander used the laws in his argumentation for the psychological effect of stylistic devices. Matti Kuusi (1949:93) dismissed Krohn’s notion of parallelism grounded in conceptual linkages as “analytically inappropriate” because, instead of formal features, it relied on interpretation. For an evaluation of Krohn’s laws, see Saarinen (2014:114-15).

Grammatically, the idea could be expressed by adding a predicate, “The village is the poor’s honor” (*Kylä on köyhän kunnia*), but this would disrupt the poetic meter.¹¹ The cohesion within both lines is enhanced with alliteration: the first syllables *ky*, *köy*, *ku* represent weak alliteration and the pairing *vai* and *va* qualifies as strong alliteration. Semantic parallelism linking the lines is complete, as each of the constituents in the first line finds its match in the parallel line. The idea of the village is completed by referring to the community inhabiting it with the term *miero*.¹² The substitution reveals that the village in this case is actually a metonym for the community, the people who provide for the poor. The word *miero* has, however, negative connotations as well. It points at a social and existential distance between the individual and his or her environment: the village is *miero* as opposed to the individual; the remote areas are *miero* as opposed the home village; and the society and state power are *miero* as opposed to the local community. (Tarkka 2013:43, 46.) The inherent ambivalence in the concept of *miero* shows the parallel “village” in a new light. Both village and *miero* are opposites of the self and home; the paradigmatic series elaborates on the relationship between individual and society.

The poor parallels with the pauper, or *vaivanen*, a word derived from the word for ailments and troubles (*vaiva*—*vaivanen*—genitive form *vaivasen*). The idea—or the paradigm—of the provision offered for the poor associates honor with means. The word for honor (*kunnia* or *kunnivo*) had the additional meaning of treats and delicacies (KKSK II:441), but even so, both generosity and the legitimacy of being at the mercy of others was given an ethical approval. There was no shame in begging. This short example already shows that semantic parallelism generates new meanings and articulates conceptual categories. Matti Kuusi (1954:154) has observed that in proverbs built on parallelism, the parallel terms are rarely synonymous. Analogical and especially antithetical parallelism are far more common. This suggests that the argumentative structure and aim of proverbs favors parallel constructions with maximal variation on the level of meaning.

Several observers testify that the people of Vuokkiniemi used alliteration and parallelistic couplets, such as the one above, in their speech to gain authority and have aesthetic impact. The aim was to communicate in a figurative, yet precise manner (Perttu 1978:185). Arguments were clothed “in proverbial form” and, if they were witty enough, they were repeated and they gradually “joined the common stock of proverbs” (Lönnrot 1902:170). It was said that the way of speech was “contagious” (Perttu 1978:187). Elias Lönnrot (1985 [1840]:xliv) explained that the origin of formulaic couplets in poetry was in this manner of colloquial speech. Parallelistic couplets such as “on these wretched borderlands, the poor Northern country” (*näillä raukoilla rajoilla, poloisilla Pohjan mailla*), or, “woe is me, the poor boy, woe the boy of poor fate” (*voi minä poloinen poika, voi poika polon alainen*), had circulated in discourse “from time immemorial” and from there, “they were blended unaltered into songs.” In the songs they were tied with mythical allusions and a rich narrative universe. The authority of the mythic heroes enriched them and charged them with meaning and power. To have their share of this authority,

¹¹ A long initial (that is, stressed) syllable in the falling position in the second and the third foot would contrast with conventions of the meter, which requires that only short stressed syllables appear in these positions.

¹² See Tarkka (2013:43); KKSK (III:318).

people cited the epic heroes, and the proverbial expressions returned to the circulation of everyday speech, now with a new emphasis (Tarkka 2013:181-204 and 2016:185-87).

Repetition and subtle variation of sound patterns, meanings and structures were thus favored in communication, and especially in proverbial speech. This “way of speech” (*pakinanluatu*) was not neutral, but heightened and complex, largely due to its figurative nature and rigid structure. Not all people understood it, and those who did had to make an effort: “. . . when everybody always spoke in proverbs, understanding it all was hard work” (Perttu 1978:187). The speakers and listeners had to master the strategies of producing proverbial speech and of framing proverbs in discourse. Further, the competences of creating and understanding poetry included knowledge of the lexicon of crystallized, stereotypical proverbs and their constituent parts, lines in the Kalevala-meter, and the paradigmatic sets used in producing parallel lines. The performers also had to master the syntagmatic grammar of creating metrically and stylistically valid lines.

The role of embedded proverbial couplets, or proverbial couplets inserted in longer poetic texts varies greatly according to the genre that serves as the new context of the couplet (Tarkka 2016:181-90). Here, I concentrate on the Kalevala-meter aphorism, a hybrid genre that combines the elements of proverbs and proverbial expressions into longer non-narrative poems of four to as many as twenty lines. Matti Kuusi (Kuusi and Timonen 1997:xxvii) tentatively classifies proverbs of four or more lines as aphoristic poems. The aphorism is, however, (at least ideally) something more than an extended proverb. If the proverb itself employs figurative speech and metaphor, the parallel constructions of several proverb lines tend to deepen and expand the meaning of the initial proverbial couplet. In Viena the aphorisms or proverbial poems were designated with the same generic term as proverbs and the register of proverbial speech—they were all called *poverkka* or *sananpolvi* (“turn of phrase,” literally “bend of word”), referring to the indirect expressive strategies involved (Tarkka 2016:179).

Both proverbs and aphorisms had to convey an independent idea and comply with conventions of form and style that were culturally understandable and aesthetically compelling. Even a concise proverb was by definition a finalized and entextualized chunk of communication, albeit one that relied upon the context in order to be meaningful. Actually, as Porthan (1867:325) noted, even a single main line should be semantically independent and complete. With the gradual extension of the text from one single line to a couplet and further, however, the contextualizing—or entextualizing (see Bauman and Briggs 1990:73-74)—potential of the surrounding text grew stronger, as did the text’s ability to communicate a specific meaning even outside the immediate context of performance (Tarkka 2016:189).

Let us start with a proverb that, according to Anni Lehtonen, had a simple but poignant meaning, “Listen when you are being taught!” (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)4713. 1912-1913):¹³

*Ota oppi otsahas,
neuvo nenävarthehes.*

¹³ Paulaharju’s transcription of the Karelian language does not usually catch the phonetic characteristics of Viena Karelian (for example, sibilants such as š or ś and palatalization such as ř). The orthographies in the sources quoted and in the forms presented by the Karelian dictionary (KKSK) are therefore incompatible. See also Saarinen (2013:39).

Take the learning onto your forehead,
the advice onto the bridge of your nose.

With the exception of the predicate all of the words in the first line have a parallel in the second line, and there is no major alteration in the meaning: “learning” and “advice” as well as “forehead” and “nose” match semantically. The paradigm for the notion of learning refers to the core values in Viena Karelian culture, knowledge, and wisdom (see Tarkka 2013:498-99). The paradigm referring to the consciousness, mind, or memory of the one advised is a bodily metonym: the cerebral “forehead” is complemented with the “nose,” or literally, “bridge of the nose.” In the Karelian language, the nose has various connotations of honor, even aggressive willpower, tenacity, and wisdom (Tarkka 2013:315). The parallelistic combination of the cerebral and the socially, physically, and even magically resonant body part presents learning as a holistic process. It changes the individual and his or her dispositions.

In 1915 Anni varied and extended this couplet in a didactic aphorism. She now instructs the listener to prepare for foreign lands (indentation in the poetic texts is added by the author and it indicates the parallel sets, usually couplets, within one single text; unless otherwise stated, space between lines indicates that the passages have been rendered as separate texts by the collector) (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9232. 1915):

*Ota oppi otsahas,
neuvo nenävartehes,
kun lähet moalla vierahalla,
uusilla asuin mailla.*

Take the learning onto your forehead,
the advice onto the bridge of your nose,
when you leave for foreign lands,
new lands to dwell in.

The proverbial couplet is completed with a description of its context of use, thus showing one of the proverb’s relevant applications and completing the base meaning with a contextual one. The conjunctive “when” (*kun*) ties the couplets together. Such explicit couplings between lines are not stylistically favored in Kalevala-meter poetry, and this one resembles the elicitation of the proverb’s base meaning given by Anni above: “Listen when you are being taught!” Here, the proverb “rises” (or *insurgit*) and is entextualized as a poem (see Tarkka 2016:188-89) by including the contextual rationale within the poetic text itself.

A closer look at Anni’s use of formulae, couplets, and proverbs in the composition of longer poetic utterances gives additional information on the role of parallelism in the creation of coherent and cohesive performances. What was the role of parallelism beyond the couplet? In 1911 Anni performed the following string of proverbs (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)2499-2501. 1911-1912):

*Ota oppi otsahas,
neuvo nenävartehes.*

*Elä neuvo neuvottua,
elä seppeä opeta.*

*Eihän ennen oppi ojanen lykänt,
eikä mahti moalta ajant.*

Take the learning onto your forehead,
the advice onto the bridge of your nose.

Don't advise the one advised,
don't teach the smith.

Formerly, learning didn't push one into a ditch,
and might didn't drive one off one's land.

On the level of each couplet, semantic parallelism is rigid and consistent. The second couplet presents an agent who has already been advised and taught: he is a “smith” and needs no more lessons. The word choice reflects the Karelian notion of the smith as the quintessential holder of mythic knowledge and practical know-how (see Tarkka 2012:161). In the third couplet learning and knowledge are characterized as might. Here, the paradigmatic extension reveals one more aspect of knowledge: that knowledge is power. Moreover, the syntagmatic level connects such social capital with ideals of good life. Leading a life is rendered metaphorically as walking a road, ideally, without falling off of it and into a ditch. The other semantically comparable aspect of a good life was life at home, without a need to wander in remote areas in search of a meager livelihood.

Considered as one text (or sequence of three proverbial couplets), the six lines are characterized by thematic cohesion that builds from couplet to couplet and the whole text discusses the primary metapoetic theme in Karelian oral poetry (see Tarkka 2013:104-09, 183-94). The repetition of homonyms and etymologically related words (*figurae etymologicae*) already creates cohesion, an effect of parallelism that Matti Kuusi (1983:192) calls “a semantic-phonological binding between lines.” The nouns “learning” (*oppi*) and “advice” (*neuvo*) reverberate in the verbs of the second couplet, “to advise” (*neuvoa*) and “to teach” (*opettaa*). As an argumentative sequence, the three proverbial couplets exhibit a dialogic or conversational progression. The first argument asserts the obligation to learn; the second pronounces a defiant stance by implying that there is nothing more to be learned. The third couplet is conciliatory. It points out that there is always something to be learned: learning is a life-long process. Such knowledge is authorized as pragmatic and traditional because it has been used “formerly” (*ennen*), with good results. The defiance expressed in the previous couplet is revealed to be hubris. Gradual elaboration of the theme makes the poetic argument “rise,” and it intensifies and deepens the meanings attributed to the theme. Together, the couplets tell us more

than each tells alone: they relate knowledge and know-how to power relations and values. The argument in the dialogue between the couplets builds a hierarchical and argumentative thematic structure where there initially seemed to be none. The three proverbial couplets can thus be interpreted as one poem, bound together with multiple parallelisms.

Two years later Anni continued her discussion on the essence of knowledge in a series of seven successive proverbs. It is clear that the theme was significant to her, and it echoed her experiences as an initiate into the knowledge of a ritual specialist, a *tietäjä* (see Tarkka 2016:192) (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)6380-86. 1913):

*Ei mahti moalta kiellä,
eikä mahti moalta aja,
eikä oppi ojah lykkeä.*

*Ei mahitta moata käyvä,
tietä käyvä tietoloitta.*

*Kysy mahtie moan käyneheltä,
tietä tien kulkenehelta.*

*Ken moata kulkoo,
se mahtiakin löytää.*

*Ei oppi ojah lykkää,
eikä moalta aja.*

*Ota oppi otsahas,
neuvo nenävarthehes.*

*Se on oppi ensimmäini:
kuin vain siivosti olet,
niin joka paikkah kelpoat.*

Might doesn't withhold one's land,
and might doesn't drive one off one's land,
and learning doesn't push one into a ditch.

One doesn't tread the land without might,
tread the road without knowledge.

Ask for might from those who've trod the land
the road from those who've roamed the road.

Who roams the land,
will find might, too.

Learning doesn't push one into a ditch,
nor drive one off one's land.

Take the learning onto your forehead,
the advice onto the bridge of your nose.

This is the first lesson:
if you just are decent,
then you will fit anywhere.

Again, the series is characterized by parallelism both within and between the couplets. The sequence now starts with the same assertion of the necessity of knowledge that Anni used in the conclusion of the previous proverb sequence. The notion of a good life that motivates the line “learning doesn’t push you into a ditch” is expanded in the following couplets. Life is a journey and the course of life is a road to roam. In order to keep on the road you need knowledge and skills, and those who teach you are those who have been around. A temporary closure is accomplished by repeating the initial couplet in an abbreviated form. The first five couplets are not only thematically bound, but also, sound patterns such as alliteration and assonance add a sense of flowing cohesion. Word pairs joining the paradigm of knowledge to the paradigm of travel, *mahti—moa* (“might—land”), *oppi—oja* (“learning—ditch”), and *tieto—tie* (“knowledge—road”), are combined and recombined, rolling the lines and couplets ahead. From the second to the fourth, the couplets are joined together by repeating the verb in the last line of the couplet in the first line of the next couplet (*käydä, kulkea*; “tread,” “roam”).

The argumentative structure deviates from the earlier proverb sequence. The contrastive stances are absent. The authorization of knowledge is expanded by stating that moving around presupposes knowledge and power, but at the same time provides more knowledge. This spiral of learning also reveals a new dimension to the notion of knowledge: “might” (*mahti*) is paralleled with a diminutive form of the word for knowledge, *tietolo* (normally *tietohuo*). This paradigmatic shift refers to the magically effective specialist knowledge of the *tietäjä*: mythic knowledge, or knowledge of ritual practices and incantations (Siikala 2002:79-84; Tarkka 2013:104-09). The new emphasis is grounded in the notion of a supranormal threat placed by a foreign environment on a person’s psycho-physical integrity. Being on the move was dangerous, but this danger could be met with supranormal power and knowledge (Tarkka 2013:409-12).

After this contemplation on the landscape of learning, the rhetoric changes. The couplet that opened the previous sequence of three proverbs is again an explicit exhortation. The speaker addresses the listener and tells him or her to mind the words of a wiser one. With this framing device, the speaker steps into the role of teacher and performs the first lesson. In terms of form and content, the last group of lines differs radically from the poetically fashioned lines preceding it. The triplet opening the whole sequence as well as the unit closing it are formal variations that mark the opening and closure and thus the boundedness and identity of the text as a whole. The

closing unit consists of a framing clause and a couplet. It is the only unit that is not internally parallelistic and it uses a conjunctive to link the lines twice (if, then). The framing clause, “This is the first lesson” (*Se on oppi ensimmäini*) is, in contrast to the lesson to follow, an immaculate line in the Kalevala-meter. The framing line is intertextually connected to (and possibly adapted from) the epic poem *The Song of Lemminkäinen* in which the reckless hero Lemminkäinen is being advised by his mother on the perils that he will meet on his journey to the otherworld. The episode in this epic poem is built on a structure of repetition: Lemminkäinen inquires of his mother the nature of each peril, and his mother gives him the lessons and frames them with a formulaic phrase “This is the first peril” (for example, SKVR I2 811).¹⁴ The lesson disclosed by Anni is, however, a platitude whose interpretation as two lines of verse rather than an unmetred phrase is based solely on Paulaharju’s typography, that is, how he chose to position the text on the paper.

Proverb sequences of this kind offer alternative points of view to the idea being processed: they are discussions on a theme. Thematic associations and the argumentative development of the idea, as well as stylistic devices such as sound patterning and different forms of parallel coupling in the sequence of proverbs, create cohesion and coherence, and eventually display textual organization and a hierarchical structure. According to Mikhail Bakhtin (1986:76-77), such processes of compositional finalization aim at an exhaustive treatment of the theme in a way that matches the performer’s intentions, that is, what they wish to express. For Peter Seitel (2003:284-86, emphasis in original), finalization results in rhetorical efficacy: “*compositional finalization articulates principal themes in logically expected places to maximize the effect and efficiency of performance.*” Most importantly, the expressive intentions steering the process of finalization govern the performer’s choice of “speech genre” (Bakhtin 1986:78).

Anni clearly struggled to maximize the effect of her performance for Paulaharju, although the nature of this communicative act is far from typical artistic communication. Having argued for a cohesive and coherent thematic composition, and thus the existence of a poem, it is time to consider the genre in question. In emic terms, the whole would qualify as a *poverkka*, because proverbial expressions, proverbs, and aphorisms were not distinguished within vernacular terminology. Here the problem of genre is primarily caused by the situation of performance: a collector of folklore reading proverbs aloud from a book and an informant responding by producing a sequence of related (or, in the spirit of semantic parallelism, equivalent) expressions. As an instance of proverbial speech, that is, a conversational utterance produced by one interlocutor, a series of seven proverbs would have been a disruptive monologue—unless it were a breakthrough into performance of another genre, namely an aphorism (Tarkka 2016:189). It is also possible, however, that Anni wished to represent a possible exchange of proverbial expressions between two or more interlocutors, and such a discussion might well have taken place: people in Vuokkiniemi could and did talk and argue with *poverkkas* (Tarkka 2013:73-75). In the Paulaharju-Lehtonen collection there are several cases of such fictive discussions (see, for example, Tarkka 2013:310). This interpretation of the genre (representation of a possible instance of proverbial exchange of words for a folklore collector) would explain why a fully competent singer and composer of Kalevala-meter poems did not succeed in producing metrically regular

¹⁴ See Frog, “Parallelism Dynamics I,” this volume.

lines in this particular performance.¹⁵ In conversation, ideals concerning style and meter of proverbial expressions could easily be relaxed. In Viena Karelia, proverbs were produced both in the Kalevala-meter and without any poetic meter, and intermediary metricality was also common (Kuusi 1978). As proverbs, the couplets were probably well-formed enough (see Note 9), but as an entextualized poem, the ideals were not met.

Unmetered Couplets and Formulaic Structure: *The Self Wouldn't*

Anni Lehtonen also performed highly cohesive and aesthetically clear poems which do not strive towards the Kalevala-meter. One such poem, which I call *The Self Wouldn't*, was recorded by Paulaharju in 1915. The formal structure of the poem is based on pervasive parallelism, with the slight but accumulating variation of the theme brought about by recurrent phraseology, syntactic repetition, and alliteration. On the level of the line, the norms of the Kalevala-meter are not met, but the poetic quality is signalled by a marked word order and regular use of ornamental words in the main line.¹⁶ The poem was performed amidst proverbs dealing with the theme of song and singing, and it was preceded by a two-line couplet with end-rhyme (see Fig. 3). Anni denies her willingness to sing (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9613. 1915):

Ei se suu laulais,

vain suru laulaa.

Ei se itse huhuais,

vain huoli huhuo.

Ei se itse itkis,

vain ikävä itköö.

Ei se itse valittais,

vain vaivat ne valittaa.

Ei se itse läksis,

vain köyhyys käsköö lähtömäh.

The mouth wouldn't sing,

but the sorrow sings.

The self wouldn't call,

but the worry calls.

The self wouldn't cry,

but the longing cries.

The self wouldn't wail,

¹⁵ Only six out of 22 lines in the two proverb sequences meet metrical ideals. On Anni's competence in the metrical form, see Huttu-Hiltunen (2008:138-40).

¹⁶ In each main line the negative *ei* ("[would] not") precedes the subject *itse* ("self"); the word *se* ("it," left untranslated) has no semantic content but merely ornaments the line. For example, a literal translation of the first main line would be "Not [it] the mouth would sing" instead of a normal word order "The mouth would not sing" (*Suu ei laulaisi*).

but the ailments they wail.
 The self wouldn't leave,
 but poverty tells one to leave.

The couplets are based on antithetical parallelism in which the first line offers a negative assertion (x_1 does not y) and the second a positive one (but x_2 does y).¹⁷ Each couplet is built similarly, and the couplets are joined together by syntactic parallelism, lexical repetition, and alliteration. The poem displays a series of symmetrical explanations of why a human being expresses herself: expressions are outlets for compelling sentiments. Semantically, the couplets elaborate on the mutual dependency of three elements: the ego (“self”), the sentiment (“longing” and so on), and the verb (“to cry” and so on). In the continuum of the parallelistic whole, each of these elements forms a paradigm of alternative expressions. The paradigm referring to the ego of the poem is concise: the ego presents herself as the “self” four times and only once with an alternative expression. This alternative for “self” is a bodily metonym: the ego is presented as a “mouth” making sorrowful sounds, such as this very poem. The self-as-mouth indicates a fusion

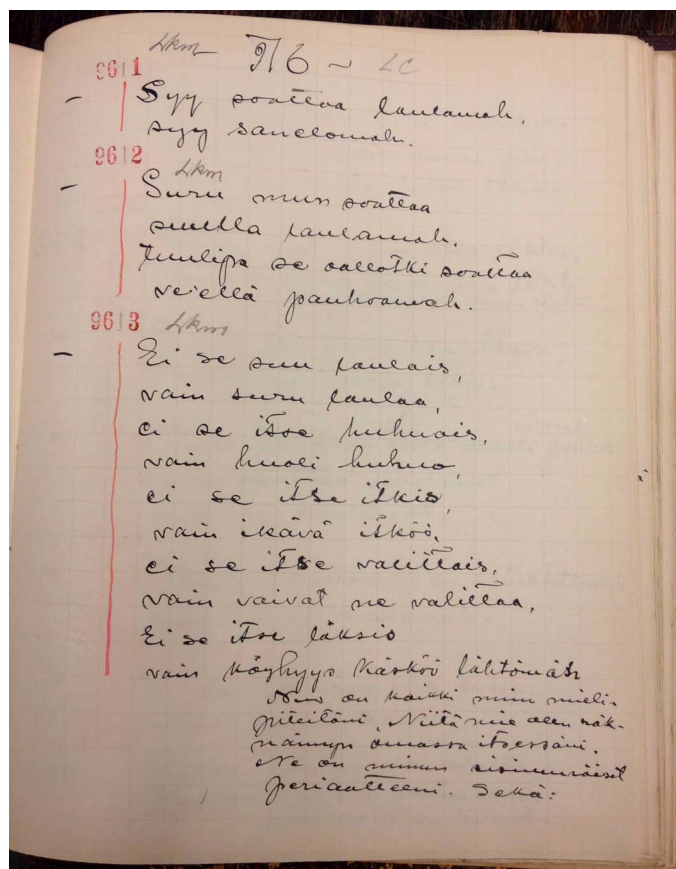


Fig. 3. The Self Wouldn't (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9611-13. 1915). The poem is preceded by proverbs and a couplet with end-rhyme contemplating on the causes for singing; and followed by the singer's comment on the profound personal meaningfulness of the poem. Photo by author.

of the singer of this particular performance and the ego of the song. It is thus a metapragmatic trope, a trope that makes the use and making of the poem a topic for the poem itself. Indeed, the singer explained the personal and autobiographical quality of the poem: “Those are all my opinions. I have pondered them inside my own self [*omassa itsessäni*]. They are my innermost principles.” Here another metapragmatic level is realized. The contents of the poem are Anni's opinions, personal ideas, propositions, and arguments that she keeps and reorganizes inside her “self.” The metaphor of the mind as a container could easily be dismissed as automatized parlance, but the poem makes a point. Senni Timonen (2004:351) has analyzed the vernacular notion of venting or “winnowing” one's feelings (*tuskien tuultaminen*): in poetic language, pain was said to be thrown out of the vacuum inside the suffering one, out into the open in the guise of words. This was one of the performative functions of lyric songs.

¹⁷ See Oinas (1985).

With the exception of the first couplet, the first line in all the couplets seems ungrammatical. The subject “self” would normally require a verb in the first person singular, but here, the “self” is generalized and conveyed with the third person singular: “the self wouldn’t cry” (*ei itse itkisi*) instead of “I myself wouldn’t cry” (*en itse itkisi*). This is, however, a legitimate use of the word *itse* in Karelian: it can refer to the speaker, or to a human being in general, in that case used as a noun (KKSK I:467). With its reference to the human being in general, the “self” also effectively conveys the stance of proverbialization coined by Thomas DuBois. Proverbialization is a native hermeneutic tradition in lyric poetry that describes typical feelings and collective modes of understanding, but not particular feelings or events (DuBois 1986). In this instance this strategy points at the close relationship of lyric poetry and aphorisms in Kalevala-meter poetry (Tarkka 2016:188-89). The typical first person singular is often replaced by agents in the third person who tend to be emblematic characters with which the lyrical self can identify (Tarkka 2013:130). Lastly, the word choice also reflects the vernacular notions of selfhood. Karelian *itse* (Fi. *itse*) refers to the conscious and rational mind. One who lacks this faculty is *itsetöin* (literally “self-less”), that is, senseless, unconscious, unable to look after himself, or dead drunk (Harva 1948:249; KKSK I:469; Toivonen 1944:103-09.) In Anni’s poem, the intentional side of the singer’s being, or the *itse*, refused to sing.

The verb paradigm resonates with the abundant metapoetic vocabulary referring to the act of singing and performing poems (see Tarkka 2013:148). Singing, calling, crying, and wailing define the genre of the performance described in the poem, but not of the poem itself. These verbs indicate a lyric poem or a ritual lament (see Tarkka 2013:406), but the present hybrid poem is clearly neither; lyric poems conform more or less to the ideals of the Kalevala-meter, and the laconic expression of the poem is a far cry from the lavishly repetitive register of ritual laments.¹⁸ Although the song of sorrow is eventually verbalized, there is no indication of cathartic relief as the reluctant singer denies her involvement in the performance. She is merely the platform of the overwhelming emotions that find their outlet through her mouth.

The paradigm of the sentiment (namely sorrow, worry, longing, ailment) pictures a negative mood by personalizing the sentiments: the emotion is an agent that makes sounds and expresses itself. What is the role of the ego or of human agency in coping with emotions? The self is not merely immersed in and stagnated by sorrow. In accordance with the vernacular concepts of illness, emotion is an agent that has possessed the human being and sings in her. The second to last member of the paradigm, “ailment” (*vaiva*), is actually not a sentiment, but a condition, a state of deprivation with bodily, mental, and social aspects. The noun *vaiva* is the trunk for the adjective *vaivainen* (“infirm”). This adjective is in turn used as a noun referring to a pauper, and this semantic turn forms a bridge to the last couplet.

In the last couplet, the verb paradigm changes abruptly and verbs for emotional expression are exchanged for a verb of movement in space. The sentiment paradigm takes on a new turn, too, as the slot for the emotion is filled with a noun indicating the reason for the sentiments and for the movement in space. Poverty, one aspect of deprivation, is the ultimate reason for the sorrows and for leaving, and, ultimately for the whole performance. After the

¹⁸ Anni was a competent performer of laments (Paulaharju 1995:7-8). On the register of laments, see Stepanova (2015).

poem Anni went on delving into the theme: “I wouldn’t have left; it was the misery that left” (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9615. 1915). Paulaharju reported that with these lines Anni referred to the current journey to the town of Oulu where the performance took place.

In Anni’s poetry the basic syntactic mold of the couplet structured on antithetical parallelism (x_1 does not y / but x_2 does y) was an effective vehicle for formulating diverse ideas concerning personhood, agency, free will, expression and the human condition. Instead of the first person singular, transposed to the noun *itse*, the ego could be “a poor human being” (*ihmisparha*) (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9619. 1915) or a person. The mold operated as a formula in the composition of new poetic statements on the link between the motives behind emotive expressions, their manners, and their vocalizations. Transposed to the male sphere of action, alcohol had the same capacity as emotion had in the human mind in general (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)4407-08. 1912-13):

*Ei mies huhuo,
vain viina huhuo.*

*Ei mies laula,
vain viina laulaa
kun on miehen peässä.*

A man doesn’t call,
but booze calls.

A man doesn’t sing,
but booze sings
when it is in a man’s head.

The last clause is not a proper poetic line, but an explanation that breaks with the style, structure, and metaphoric reasoning of the previous lines, as if the performer did not trust in the ability of the listener to grasp the metaphorical nature of the idea “booze sings.” This was not the whole story, however. Similar to the previous paradigm of sentiment, the ultimate reason for the unhappy performance was found not in alcohol *per se*, but in the reasons for consuming it, as Anni expressed on another occasion (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)7059. 1913):

*Silloin mies juo kun köyhyys tuloo,
köyhyys juomah käsköö.*

Then the man drinks when poverty comes,
poverty tells one to drink.

Obviously, the paradigm of sentiment can thus be rephrased as the paradigm of the psycho-physical cause of action. Sentiments and alcohol make people act, but the *primus motor* is deprivation, that is, poverty. Satu Apo (2001:67) has noted that the ontologizing metaphors for

alcohol in Finnish and Karelian folklore personify alcohol into a being capable of possessing the human being and making him do things such as singing. The metaphorical image “booze sings” is, however, not a straightforward personification of alcohol, but a “processual model of intoxication: ‘consuming beer/spirits makes man possessed by an alien force; the force makes him behave in a manner out of the ordinary’” (Apo 2001:68). The last example also suggests that poverty itself is an “alien force” that “comes” and “tells” people to take action, to leave, drink, or sing (see also Tarkka 2013:254). This metaphoric reasoning implies that those who were hit by poverty do not cause this predicament themselves.

Anni Lehtonen used the couplets built on antithetical parallelism as a formulaic mold in the production of proverbs, proverb sequences, and longer poems. In the ten lines of *The Self Wouldn't*, the rhetorical effect of parallelism described by Porthan is obvious. Parallelisms build a hypnotic succession: they make the poem ascend and finally reach the climax. The verbatim repetition of “the self wouldn't” in the first half of the first line of each couplet, except for the first couplet,)—intensifies the effect. Repeating the verb in the lines of each couplet (for example, wouldn't sing / sings) serves the same rhythmical and persuasive purposes. Further cohesion is created by alliteration that works within the line (for example, *huoli huhuo*) or between the lines (for example, *suu / suru*) and even both ways (*itse itkis / ikävä*). The climactic emergence of poetic structure and coherence concerns the content of the poem, too. In the end, the reason for the lines and the performance itself are revealed.

Although the introverted message of *The Self Wouldn't* is coherent and characterized by Anni as her “innermost principle,” she was ready and willing to contradict herself on the matter. As in the argumentative structure of the knowledge-related proverbs, she engages in a dialogue with herself (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9582. 1915):

*Kun tuloo ikävä, niin laula,
kun tuloo ilo, niin naura,
kun tuloo huoli, niin huhuo,
kun tullah kaikki yht'aikoa vierahiks, niin rupie maata.*

When longing comes, sing,
when joy comes, laugh,
when a worry comes, call,
when all of them come together to visit, lie down.

The style and parallelistic structure is familiar from *The Self Wouldn't*, but the lines (or rather, clauses) themselves resemble everyday rather than poetic expression: only the repetitive variation discloses the poetic quality. Alliteration, parallelism, and assonance tighten the interconnectedness of the first three lines, and the paradigm of sentiment is interrupted with a positive feeling. Correspondingly, the verb paradigm is extended into a verb that characterizes emotional reactions rather than performances.¹⁹ The last line exemplifies the comic potential of

¹⁹ “Laugh” or “laughter” (*nauru, naku*) were also vernacular terms for mocking songs (Tarkka 2013:269, 277), but here, the syntagmatic connection with “joy” reveals the contextual meaning.

strict parallelistic structures. Disruption of the expected repetition, both in terms of syntax and message, produces absurd and understated humor. With the emotional incongruence of simultaneous joy and worry, the only option is to lie down and have a rest. Also, the abrupt change in the verb paradigm from verbs describing vocalization to verbs describing bodily movement corresponds to that in the structure of *The Self Wouldn't* (sing—laugh—call—lie down / sing—call—cry—wail—leave). The message is however diametrically opposed to that of *The Self Wouldn't*: the singer urges the listener to express his or her sentiments as they come.

Dialectic Contemplation in Autobiography: *The Widow's Song*

The previous cases of Anni's verse-making have shown that internally parallelistic couplets could function as formulae, and that their combination into more complex and longer texts was not a mechanical expansion, but a complex process of activating the paradigmatic sets operative in the treatment of the theme. The expressions—words, lines, and couplets—carried with them a vast array of associations and intertextual cues relating them to the tradition as a whole. The last case study focuses on a lyric poem in the Kalevala-meter that Anni composed of the same traditional, internally parallelistic couplets that she used widely in her poetry.²⁰ The lyric poem *The Widow's Song* deals with the experience of widowhood. Anni said that she had learned the song from her mother, who used to sing it while fishing.²¹ Anni's mother had lost her husband when Anni was six years old, and when Anni performed the song to Samuli Paulaharju in 1911, she too was raising her six children on her own. Her husband Kliimo had died of typhoid five years earlier. (Tarkka 2013:245.) The poem is a coherent sequence of couplets. For the purposes of analysis, I have divided the poem into six passages (distinguished here by a space between lines) that each comprise a thematic whole and correspond grammatically to sentences or exclamatory clauses (SKVR I3 1388):²²

²⁰ For an intertextual analysis of *The Widow's Song*, see Tarkka (2013:245-57).

²¹ A reconstruction of the sung performance of Anni Lehtonen's *The Widow's Song* was recorded at the Finnish Literature Society, February 28, 2017. The singers, Kati Kallio, Ph.D and Heidi Haapoja, Ph.D. are folklorists and trained folk musicians who specialize in the interplay of music and text in Kalevala-meter poetry. The musical reconstruction by Kallio and Haapoja is based on the notations on Anni Lehtonen's melodies made by Juho Ranta (SKS KRA. Ranta VK 79. 1914) and knowledge of the local styles of singing in Western Viena Karelia. The text follows Paulaharju's transcription closely, but some details of pronunciation have been added to match the vernacular. The melody is one used by Anni in a wedding song notated by Ranta; such melodies were also common in lyric songs. The duet performance style approximates the situation in which Anni claimed to have learned the song from her mother.

²² Although Kalevala-meter poetry is basically non-stanzaic, thematic and/or narrative passages are discernible on the basis of content. Heikki Laitinen (2004:163-64) calls them "free versed stanzas" and emphasizes that they are the scholar's deductions. In performance, these are rarely signalled by pauses or musical structuring (see also Kallio in this issue). Laitinen notes that the discrepancy between stanzaic (thematic) structure and the musical structure creates a dramatic tension in the poem. The length of these passages varies greatly; in the epic poem analysed by Laitinen, the length of sequences ranges from 2 to 12 lines. For a critical assessment of the discussion on stanzas in Kalevala-meter poetry, see Anttonen (1994:116-18).

*Aina sitä aamusta elävi
vain illasta on kovin ikävä,
 kuin on kuollut kumppaliini,
 vaipun' vaippaani alaiini.*

*Ei ole miehestä mennehestä,
urohosta uponnehesta.*

*Oi miun poikia poloisen,
oi miun laiton lapsosieni.*

*Mont' on tuulta tuulovata,
mont' on saapuva sajetta
 lakittoman peälajella,
 kintahittoman käsillä.*

*Kyllä se voipi voipa Luoja,
soattavi sulo Jumala
 ylentää aletun mielen,
 nostaa lasketun kypärän,
 notkot nostaa, vaarat painaa,
 notkot nostaa, vaarat painaa,
 emännästä orjan soaha,
 piijasta talon pitäjän.*

*Olin miekin miessä ennen,
uurohona kuuventena
 ilman pieltä pistämässä,
 taivoista tähittämässä.*

One always survives in the morning
but the longing gets hard in the evening
 for my companion has died,
 the one beneath my quilt has gone under.

The long-gone one is no man,
the drowned one [is] no hero.

Oh sons of poor me,
oh children of weebegone me.

Many winds will blow,
many rains will fall

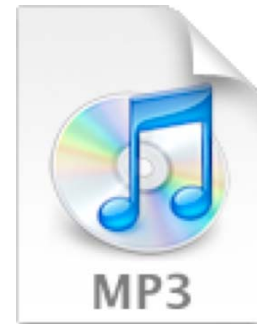


Fig. 4. Reconstruction of the sung performance of Anni Lehtonen's *The Widow's Song*, Kati Kallio and Heidi Haapoja. Recorded at the Finnish Literature Society, February 28, 2017.
[http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/31ii/tarkka/#myGallery-picture\(4\)](http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/31ii/tarkka/#myGallery-picture(4))

upon the capless head,
upon the mittenless hands.

Yes, the almighty Creator can,
the sweet God may
 raise the sunken spirit,
 lift the lowered helmet,
 lift the hollows, flatten the hills,
 lift the hollows, flatten the hills,
 turn the woman of the house into a serf,
 the maid into the household head.

I, too, was once one of the men,
the sixth of the heroes
 framing the air,
 starring the sky.

The first passage sets the stage by giving an emotional assessment of the situation and the incidents leading to it. The first couplet in the passage exhibits contrastive parallelism through the paired opposition of times of day and moods of the widow. The first two lines are also exceptional in their use of the passive. They indicate that the first-person account to follow is a typical one and invite the listener to identify with the ego of the poem: this could happen to anyone. The second couplet provides a causal explanation for the emotions described in the first one. The widow mourns over her deceased beloved. Echoing the emotional assessment, the paradigm for the beloved stresses intimacy. The widow used to share her bed with the deceased. Again, the conjunctive ties the two couplets together firmly.

The second and the third passage offer alternating points of view on the deceased. First the widow portrays him as useless: the man is no more there for her. The couplet is a proverb also used as a formula in epic poetry.²³ Here, it extends the paradigm of death with three more euphemistic verbs: to die is “to go under,” “to go,” and “to drown.” The landscape of loss refers to the underworld and to an underwater realm; losing something is a way down. The third passage is a vocative phrase that implicitly presents the deceased as a father. The widow pities herself (“poor me,” “woebegone me”) and her children, the orphans (“oh sons,” “oh children”).

The fourth passage pictures the conditions of the bereaved. Without any shelter, they are exposed to the natural forces. The widow describes herself as “capless” and “mittenless.” These are not merely metonyms that give vulnerability a concrete form (being exposed to wet and cold). They refer to the cap and mittens used for magical protection by the *tietäjä*, and being deprived of them jeopardized their power and health. In Kalevala-meter poetry, imagery of headgear was connected to the mind, energy and social status of a person. As Anni put it, “The cap contains the mind of the man. Half of the man falls to the ground when someone removes his

²³ The couplet appears in epic poetry to evaluate the ability of the mythic hero to perform his tasks after having drifted in the primal sea or the river of Tuonela (the land of the dead)—for example, SKVR II 59, SKVR I2 758. Idiomatically the couplet translates as “the deceased counts not as a man.”

cap,” or, “The singer takes care of his/her cap so that his/her might won’t disappear” (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)8110, 9641. 1915). The *tietäjä*’s cap retained his magical power, but for Anni, the cap was above all the headgear worn by married women to symbolize their social status. By refusing to use this cap and using the headgear of a widow instead, a woman could express her dissatisfaction with her husband (Paulaharju 1995:193). The capless woman communicated her vulnerability, a state with both social and magical repercussions (Tarkka 2013:248-49).

The fourth passage turns its attention from the loss to a solution. The widow expresses her trust in God, who can make things better by turning the current unfortunate state of affairs upside down. The first reversal extends the headgear symbolism of the previous passage. In Kalevala-meter poetry, a helmet worn sideways pictured general sorrow, loss, or defeat, but it was also firmly associated with image frames of magical protection and death (Tarkka 2013:248). “The lowered helmet” is likened to the “sunken spirit” of the ego, but this state of liminality and vulnerability could be ended by God. To convey the idea of an almighty actor, Anni presents a paradigmatic set of comparable reversals. God is able to lift up the mind of the widow, as he is able to lift up the hollow lowlands and push down the hills. This landscape of defiant hope leads to the third aspect of reversal. God is able to turn social hierarchies on their head by changing the roles of master and servant. The mind and identity of the widow is likened to the forms of landscape and social structure. The parallel between the couplets thus implies a coherent world order.

The symmetry of the passage is remarkable. The couplet consisting of identical lines, “lift the hollows, flatten the hills / lift the hollows, flatten the hills” is the divide of the whole poem. Although in sung performance lines could be repeated, in manuscripts such verbatim repetition is out of the ordinary, and on the basis of this alone we can assume that instead of dictating, Anni had sung *The Widow’s Song* for Paulaharju. Heikki Laitinen notes that repetition of a line is one performative resource that the singers could use, but this use is not visible in the written manuscripts and thus is absent from the scholarly literature on parallelism in Kalevala-metre poetry. The repeated identical lines were seldom sung with the same melody: the variation and permanence in lexical and musical material was used to create an aesthetically interesting tension in the performance (Laitinen 2004:172-74).²⁴ This performative device points to thematic centrality, as does the symmetry of half line parallelism employed in the repeated line.

²⁴ In a 133-line epic song by a Vuokkiniemi singer, Anni Tenisova, Laitinen (2004:172-74) found 31 couplets bound by semantic parallelism and 10 instances of repeating the same line. Pekka Huttu-Hiltunen (2008:138-48) has analysed one of Anni Lehtonen’s epic poems (SKVR I4 2150). He presumes that Anni had sung the poem, but this does not seem to be the case. In five instances, Anni builds a bridge between a narrative episode (and lines) with a single word that is not part of the poetic diction: the conjunctive *siitä*, meaning “then,” “after that.” The strategy suggests a somewhat stammering dictation and even a drift toward prose diction. The dictated 115-line poem includes 36 cases of line parallelism but no repetitions of the same line. As there are no sound recordings on Anni’s performances, all inferences have to be drawn by way of analogy: by an assessment of Anni’s texts, the few musical transcripts and descriptions on her singing, and sound recordings of other singers in the area. On these grounds it is plausible to argue that Anni’s way of using parallelism quite independently of the musical structure is typical of the region and that repetition of the same line was a performative strategy in sung performance, not just a way to gain extra time in the processing of the following lines (see Kallio 2014:96 and this volume; Laitinen 2004:172-75; Huttu-Hiltunen 2008:140-41, 235).

Intertextually, the lines echo the words of a Lutheran hymn, “Sink, ye mountains and hills / and rise, ye hollows!” (*Vajotkaa vuoret, vaarat, / ja notkot, nouskaatte!*).²⁵ Although religious life was an amalgam of folk religion and Orthodox Christianity, overt references to Lutheran religious texts have rarely been documented in Viena Karelia and Kalevala-meter poetry. Nevertheless, both Lutheran Christianity and Laestadian revivalism were influential in Anni’s home village, Vuonninen, where Finnish hymns were sung and the Bible read aloud (Tarkka 2013:38, 51). The intertextual reference to Lutheran Christianity enhances the impact of the lines by authorizing the message and relating it to religious traditions and ideologies. Instead of simply borrowing the imagery of the lines, Anni makes a radical adaptation by converting the opening lines of a blatant missionary hymn into a powerful and rebellious image of overturning the *status quo*.

The last passage is, however, a radical departure from the Christian worldview. It alludes to archaic mythology by inserting a motif describing the creation of the universe: the speaker of the poem claims to have been one of the creators of the universe, or more precisely, of the stars and the sky above. This motif is widely used in the corpus of Vuokkiniemi and it functions as an authorization of the text and its ego. In magic incantations the motif is used to raise the performer’s spirit, and it enables him to perform effectively. In lyric poetry the motif juxtaposes the powerful (mythic) past and the destitute present and expresses a sense of nostalgia or longing for the past. In both generic contexts mentioned the rhetorical aim of the motif is to show that, because of his or her deeds in the mythic past, the ego of the text is entitled to a better future. (Tarkka 2013:237-57.) With this motif of the heavenly bodies, Anni concludes her song with a defiant note.

The first couplet of the last passage is a stable formulaic unit that opens the traditional motif of the setting of the celestial bodies. The parallel line articulates the notion of manhood: “I, too, was once one of the men.” Obviously, the protagonists in the myth of creation were all male, but the allusion to this myth could be made by women and men alike. The parallel term “hero,” or *uro*, summarizes this role as something not necessarily tied to the biological sex of the ego. Ideologically, the notion of *uro* promotes patriarchal values: men are heroes and heroes are male, as the word for a hero also means “male” (*uro, uros*) (Tarkka 2013:251-52). In the context of Anni’s poem, the idea continues the set of constitutive reversals presented in the previous passage. Being able to step into the role of *uro* was symbolically a gender reversal, as the stepping of a serf into the role of master was a reversal of power relations.

The last couplet of the song is typical of the motif of the celestial bodies. Anni condenses the motif to a minimum, but often the number of mythic and heroic acts listed is longer. Here, the paradigm of creative acts consists of “framing the air” and “starring the skies”. Alternative options are, to name a few, “moving the moon,” “setting the sun,” “bearing the vault around the air,” and “straightening the Plough” (Tarkka 2013:238-43). The landscapes of loss (passages 2-3) and defiant hope (passage 4) are completed with the ultimate, cosmic landscape. The one who has been among the creators of the cosmic landscape is entitled to the transformation of the

²⁵ The opening lines of the hymn refer to Isaiah 40 (“Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low,” *The Holy Bible*, Isaiah 40:40). The hymn was written by Frans Mikael Franzén (1772-1847) and translated into Finnish in 1903. It was first published in the song book of the Missionary Society; see Väinölä (n.d.).

landscape of loss. There is an overarching thematic parallelism in the juxtaposition of these landscapes: the low lands or the underworld of death and mourning, the reshaping of the high and low lands in the climactic turn of the poem, and lastly a concrete ascension into the celestial sphere. Here, among the potent gods the ego is empowered. The widow will rise to the status of a keeper of the house and a provider for her children. She will be an *uro*, adopting the role of the drowned one.

Communicating in Couplets

The cases treated above illustrate how a poem emerges as a dynamic operation of the rhetorical effect of parallelism, a pervasive figure in poetic discourse. Anni's command of verbal art offers a window into the operation of diction, meter, crystallized or formulaic expressions and the generation of meanings through parallel structures. In her discussions with Paulaharju, Anni herself dwelled upon the notion of poetry and the emergent nature of textuality (see Tarkka 2013:150-53). Most of her metapoetic ideas were expressed in proverbs, and thus were themselves molded by the poetic function. She distinguished between two kinds of singing and composing poems, namely "lining up" (*latelominen*) and "ladling out" (*lappaminen*). In "lining up," the singer has to "know what kind of song she is singing, what about, and what is the cause that makes her sing, and with what tune." In the vernacular metapoetic discourse, the "kind" of a song referred to the genre (Tarkka 2013:150); in addition to knowing the genre, and thus being able to select the proper stylistic and metrical devices, the theme and the topic had to be premeditated and be compatible with a traditional tune. In describing "ladling out" Anni was less specific. She relied on a metaphor and likened "ladling out" to rolling yarn from a tangled skein. It was the opposite of "lining up": it required less "material," that is, thematic substance, and anyone could do it. Anni summarized: "singing is not ladling out, singing is lining up." As a premeditated form of composition and performance, a careful elaboration of form and content, "lining up" was equal to making proper poems (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9596-9605. 1915).

Lining up a poem and singing it was "putting a word upon a word," and joining it with a tune. All the words Anni used to describe the interconnectedness of the units or elements in a poem referred either to the syntagmatic or paradigmatic axis of composing utterances. "Lining up" suggests a line, or a syntagmatic sequence of words; "putting a word upon a word" refers to a hierarchy, the accumulation of substance and meaning, and possibly repetition. The coupling of the words and the tune is rendered in a metaphor: they are joined like two parts of fishing seine, with a ligature that is called a *jame* in Karelian. Another way of formulating the act of singing foregrounded the ease of using traditional words in composition: as soon as the singer knew the topic, "a word pulled forth [another] word" (SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9603, 9626. 1915).

The phrasings "a word upon a word" (*sana sanan peällä*) and "a word pulls forth a[nother] word" (*sana sanah vetää*) can be understood as vernacular descriptions of semantic parallelism—and indeed the phrasings are parallelistic in themselves. The interconnectedness indicated by joining expressions into parallel sets is not restricted to word-to-word associations. In many oral poetries, the term "word" referred not only to single words in the modern orthographic sense, but to lines of poetry, and more specifically, lines as morpheme-equivalent

entities (Foley 1995:2-3; Frog 2014c:282-83). This meaning has also been documented in Kalevala-meter poetry (Niemi 1921:1091; Timonen 2004:257-58, 449-50). In Vuokkiniemi, with the “word” (*sana*) the singers could also refer to whole texts (for example, prayers and proverbs), crystallized and esteemed ways of speaking, or even the wisdom that they convey (Tarkka 2013:104). Putting such entities on top of each other or organizing them into lines and chains or even more complex sequences produced texts that were inevitably parallelistic.

Among these “words,” or standardized, conventional expressions, we find ready-made parallelistic couplets that are used in epic poetry to describe actors, actions and landscapes. The same couplets made their way into conversation and other genres of oral poetry, but in the new context their standardized interpretations were no longer valid. Without a definite role in the epic universe or in the plot, they were contextualized and shaped for new expressive purposes. The ready-made nature of these formulaic couplets is therefore relative. They offered themselves, however, as points of reference and a source of intertextual cues to the tradition as a whole. They also made composition easier, as Porthan argued (1867:345):

One with a good command of the language’s richness can without much effort select words that fit in the meter and vary upon his thought as he pleases—if he also has a rich and elevated mind. If there were a shortage of words and phrases this task would be much more wearisome. If the plentiful vocabulary would not ease the poets’ endeavors, they could not be put beneath a yoke more disobliging than the law of endlessly repeating sporadic thoughts.

The three case studies presented here illuminate the different aspects of Anni Lehtonen’s “vocabulary.” From a proverb to an aphorism or a sequence of proverbs, and from a strictly parallelistic hybrid poem to a Kalevala-meter lyric song, Anni articulated the themes of knowledge, poverty, loss, and vulnerability using different poetic languages and communicating her “innermost principles” and life history (see SKS KRA. Paulaharju c)9613. 1915). Elements of the knowledge-based proverb sequences (or aphorisms) were used in epic poetry and conversation. From the couplets found in the *Widow’s Song* she constructed both incantations and unforeseen proverb sequences on the themes of loss and deprivation (see Tarkka 2013:247-51). The formulaic mold of the hybrid poem *The Self Wouldn’t* could be varied endlessly to produce shorter aphorisms or proverbs. Even if formulaic expressions eased the process of composing poems, creating parallel lines in the building of poetic wholes was not necessarily a respite that eased and routinized the composition in performance. It required command of the paradigmatic sets used in producing parallel lines, as well as the syntagmatic grammar of creating metrically and/or stylistically valid lines, and beyond these, finalized poetic texts. As Linda R. Waugh (1985:150) has formulated Roman Jakobson’s notion of the multiplicity of parallelism, “parallelisms create a network of internal relations within the poem itself, making the poem into an integrated whole and underlining the poem’s relative autonomy.”

The aesthetics of parallelism is based on a dynamic combination of rigidity and fluidity. The structures and norms governing repetition and variation are rigid, but the precision sought by parallelistic extension and the resulting verbosity often make the semantic content ambiguous. Parallelism thus contributes to the semantic complexity of the message and challenges the listener. In the construction of parallel lines and the selection of parallel words, the performers of

Kalevala-meter poetry activated their knowledge of the possible, semantically relevant expressions, and they made choices that inevitably altered the meaning of the main line and affected the formulation of the next one. The flexibility of the principle of equivalence between the main word and the parallel one allowed the repetition, variation, and even contestation of the semantic content of the preceding unit. Argumentation or the affective contemplation typical of the short forms of poetry were structured in this way.

The three cases discussed here illuminate the role of parallelism in an expressive culture dominated by one poetic meter, the so called Kalevala-meter. The metrical system was flexible, and Anni Lehtonen showed that a master in this meter could take advantage of the different “degrees of well-formedness” (Frog 2014a) characteristic of poetic traditions in an oral culture. Parallelism, the pervasive feature in poetic language and oral poetry in particular (Jakobson 1987d:145-46, 173), was a decisive factor in communication not only in poetry, but in conversational language as well. Intricate patterns of repetition and variation “hammered” the listener and this hammering made the poem emerge and ascend or “rise” as a whole, as Porthan (1867:320) phrased it. From the perspective of rhetoric, this process was primarily not an emergence of a textual structure, but rather an increase in the communicative efficacy of the utterance: the message gathered force and persuaded the listener.

In the above, I have used parallelism as a methodological concept in the interpretation of Anni Lehtonen’s poems and I have treated parallelism as an enabling element in artistic expression and communication. Parallelism not only expresses meaningful connections between concepts and clauses, but it also creates them. The finalization of messages and texts in this tradition was achieved through parallelism, and only finalized meanings could be understood (Bakhtin 1986:76) and thus be worth communicating. Furthermore, the rhetorical power of rhythmic repetition maximized communicative efficacy (Porthan 1867:320). For Bakhtin (1986:76-77), finalization is connected to the performer’s intentions, or to what they wish to express. The intentionality of parallelistic techniques of composition are, however, open to dispute. For Jakobson (1985b:62-68 and 1987c:127-28), parallelistic structures are subliminal rather than intentional and conscious patterns. He argues that the “system of complex and elaborate correspondences” created and handed down in oral poetry works “without anyone’s cognizance of the rules governing this intricate network” (Jakobson 1985b:68). The generation of emergent meanings in different contexts illustrates the conscious side of composition in the use and manipulation of traditional resources. Whether the paradigmatic sets, syntagmatic rules, and ready-made variable molds are matters of conscious and intentional creativity, or whether they are encoded in the traditional language and automatized is, however, beyond the scope of this analysis—and any empirical analysis. However, Anni Lehtonen’s metapoetic comments testify that notions concerning poetry-in-the-making could be and were verbalized, and even made into poetry. Subliminal or not, the texts and meanings that the performers produced in performance became or emerged as socially relevant reality: as messages to be heard, believed, cherished, remembered, forgotten, or contested.

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